

**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

September 22, 2011 at 6:30 p.m.
Department of Administration
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

DRAFT MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

TAC members present

Ms. Fran Shocket, Chair
Mr. Robert Murray, Vice Chair
Ms. Melanie Jewett Army
Ms. Sue Barker
Mr. Mark Carruolo
Ms. Ann Clarke representing
 Mr. Kevin Dillon
Ms. Marilyn Cohen
Ms. Elaine Colarusso
Dr. Judith Drew
Mr. Barry Schiller
Mr. Henry Sherlock
Ms. Jane Sherman
Mr. Robert Shawver
Mr. Michael Wood

Public Member
Public Member
City of Providence
Greenways Alliance
City of Warwick
RI Airport Corporation

RI Chapter, American Planning Association
Town of East Greenwich
Governor's Commission on Disabilities
RI Sierra Club
Construction Industries of RI
Public Member
RI Department of Transportation
Town of Burrillville / RI League of Cities and Towns

TAC members absent

Mr. Dan Baudouin
Mr. Alan Brodd
Mr. Russ Chateauneuf
Mr. Michael Cassidy
Mr. Paul Romano
Mr. Jim Soctomah
Mr. Everett Stuart
Mr. Mark Therrien
Dr. Robert Vanderslice
Mr. Michael Walker

Providence Foundation
Town of Cumberland
RI Department of Environmental Management
Public member
Public Member
Narragansett Indian Tribe
RI Association of Railroad Passengers
RI Public Transit Authority
RI Department of Health
RI Economic Development Corporation

Others in attendance

Ms. Barbara Breslin
Ms. Meredith Brady
Mr. Grant Dulgarian
Ms. Eugenia Marks

Ms. Margherita Pryor
Mr. John Shevlin
Ms. Amy Thibeault
Mr. Bob Votava

Federal Highway Administration
RI Department of Transportation
Ecology Action for RI
Audubon Society of RI; Coalition for Transportation
Choices
RI Bicycle Coalition
Pare Corporation
RI Department of Transportation
DOT Watch

Statewide Planning Staff Present

Mr. Jared Rhodes
Ms. Karen Scott
Ms. Linsey Cameron
Ms. Ronnie Sirota

Chief
Assistant Chief
Supervising Planner
Principal Planner

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order

Ms. Shocket called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. On account of a lack of a quorum, the meeting proceeded to the Staff Report.

2. Staff Report – *for discussion*

Ms. Cameron gave the staff report:

- Rail Plan Update

The Statewide Planning Program is in the process of finalizing the agreement with the selected consultant to update the State Rail plan. The agreement has been signed with the consultant however it is awaiting final approval from the State's Purchasing office. Once the agreement is approved, staff will schedule a kick off meeting and immediately begin working on the plan. Staff expects the development of the plan to move quickly since the Statewide Planning Program has already completed a significant amount of the information and data gathering needed to update the plan.

- TIP Update 2013 - 2016

The TIP 2013 - 2016 solicitation information package was released at the end of August. Notification of the solicitation or the solicitation package itself was distributed to around 1,200 individuals at various governmental bodies, as well as private organizations. All the cities and towns' chief executive officials, planners, and public works directors, as well as the Quonset Development Corporation, RI Airport Corporation, railroad companies, private transit companies, and social advocacy groups have all received distribution by direct mail and/or email notification with posting of the complete application package and guide on Statewide Planning Program's website.

Workshops for the application process will be held Monday October 3 at 10:00 am and repeated again at 6:00 pm in Conf. Room A. Applications are due on October 28, 2011. SPP and RIDOT Staff will review and sort the applications into the various TIP categories during the first two weeks of November. During the second week of November staff will be holding the Public Hearings where all projects must be presented at one of the following:

- November 7 @ 6 pm – South Kingstown Town Hall
- November 8 @ 9 am – Department of Administration
- November 9 @ 6 pm – John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley
- November 10 @ 6 pm – Middletown Town Hall

After the public hearings, from the middle of November until the middle of January the TAC subcommittees will review and score all of the applications.

- **SRTS Workshop**

SPP along with DOT held a SRTS procedural workshop on Tuesday for the grant award communities. All 10 grant award communities were represented at the workshop.

- **Airport System Plan**

The State Planning Council adopted the plan with revisions. Members can contact Mr. Rhodes with any detailed questions and staff hopes to have the final document available within a month.

Ms. Shocket asked Ms. Cameron what the reception has been from the cities and towns to the TIP application package. Ms. Cameron replied that she has not received many comments; however, there have been a few questions on how to prioritize projects. She added that the municipalities will be able to ask questions at the upcoming workshops. It has been made clear that there is not much funding available for projects.

Ms. Clarke stated that Mr. Dillon requested notification to the RI Airport Corporation of their addition as a representative to the Rail Plan update. Ms. Cameron responded they have been added to the list but there has not been any recent communication. Once the Agreement pertaining to the Rail Plan consultant is approved, a meeting will be scheduled and notification will go out to the committee and other interested parties.

Mr. Schiller asked if Statewide Planning has thought about formation of TAC subcommittees to review the TIP applications. Ms. Cameron replied that there have been preliminary discussions to probably group the subcommittees according to TIP program category rather than geographical regions but nothing has been finalized. Mr. Rhodes stated that staff will email a listing of TIP categories that will have subcommittees to TAC members. Members can then indicate which committee they would like to serve on during the scoring and evaluation process. Mr. Rhodes stated he did speak to local planners to see if the TIP guidance document message was clear and the feedback he has received has been positive. Mr. Rhodes added that Statewide Planning has received one formal response from the Town of Tiverton who just listed one project for prioritization on the TIP.

3. Approval of June 23, 2011 Meeting Minutes– *for action*

Ms. Sherman arrived at the meeting and Ms. Shocket stated that the TAC meeting now has a quorum. Upon motion of Mr. Sherlock to approve, and seconded by Mr. Murray, the June 23, 2011 minutes were accepted unanimously. In addition, upon motion of Mr. Murray to approve, and seconded by Ms. Clarke, the August 25, 2011 minutes were accepted unanimously.

4. Public Comment on Agenda Items

There were none.

5. Transportation Improvement Program FY 2009-2012 – Amendment 12

Ms. Shocket called the public hearing to order at 6:44 p.m. As is customary, a complete report documenting the formal proceedings of the public hearing is incorporated into these minutes as Attachment 1.

TAC Consideration – for action

Following the close of the public hearing, Ms. Shocket resumed the TAC meeting at 7:28 p.m. and stated that the TAC will proceed with its consideration of the proposed Amendment.

Mr. Shawver began by addressing the comments made at the Public Hearing:

- Mr. Shawver stated that the Manville Landing project is being moved out of Enhancement funding into the TIP Earmark funding category.
- RIDOT understands the issue about the billboards however regulating placement of billboards is beyond the jurisdiction of the TIP.
- The Blackstone Bikeway has several segments to go to complete the project. The \$500,000 funding allocated will go towards landscaping and design of the project and help with the shortfall in funding.

Discussion by other TAC members followed. Ms. Sherman asked about the South Main Street ADA Project. Mr. Shawver replied that it has had some design issues and the cost has increased from \$2.5 million to \$3.5 million. He stated that the project will not disappear; it will just not start in 2012. Mr. Shawver explained that the TAC will have an influence in selecting what projects, including this one, move forward in the next TIP. Dr. Drew expressed concern that if additional funding is not obtained, the project will continue to be delayed. Mr. Shawver stated that RIDOT is hoping it will be delayed only a year. Mr. Wood asked if there is also other funding for the Matunuck Beach Stabilization Project. Mr. Shawver answered that South Kingstown is funding the design for the project. This project only protects the road and does not address the greater vulnerability of the area to flooding.

Mr. Schiller also followed up on some of the public comments. He asked if it is possible to spend money on the Northern Gateway Beautification project and still allow new billboards in the same stretch. Mr. Shawver replied that he thinks new billboards are not allowed on DOT property; however beyond RIDOT property is the jurisdiction of the local community. For the record, Mr. Schiller would like it conveyed to the State Planning Council that he believes it is inappropriate to spend funding on highway beautification in an area where new billboards are allowed. Mr. Schiller felt that if the State does spend this funding on beautification, then it should be conveyed to local zoning boards that they should not allow new billboards. Mr. Schiller then asked if private motor boats would not be allowed at the Manville Landing Project. Ms. Thibeault confirmed they would not be allowed. Mr. Schiller also asked about the status of the \$2.91 million earmark for the Blackstone bikeway. Mr. Shawver replied that RIDOT is spending the earmark money and trying to complete the Blackstone bikeway as soon as possible. Mr. Schiller also added that he does not feel that a designated graffiti wall should be established along I-95 as a means of curtailing graffiti. Mr. Schiller also stated that the gateways to Rhode Island also include the airport and the Providence Railroad Station and that they could use some additional landscaping. Mr. Shawver replied that the Governor has made the Providence Railroad Station a priority for improvements. Mr. Shawver complimented Mr. Steven Devine of RIDOT who has been very successful in getting numerous grant funds for the Station.

Ms. Shocket asked Mr. Carruolo about municipal regulations for billboards. Mr. Carruolo replied that typically a billboard cannot be located on RIDOT property. It is up to the municipality to prohibit billboards in certain zoning areas in general, however they can be located on private property. RIDOT probably does not have the staff to write objections when they are notified of private property owners proposing to add or move a billboard. Mr. Shawver commented it would be good to have the RIDOT Real Estate section give a presentation to the TAC on billboards. According to Mr. Shawver RIDOT is notified as an abutter but they probably receive hundreds of notices making it difficult to comment.

Ms. Clarke added that she would support additional landscaping along the airport connector but the wetlands on both sides of the road make it a challenge. Ms. Clarke commented that when ARRA funds were available, RIDOT had projects designed and ready to go out for construction, and therefore, received federal funds. She would like the TAC to keep that in mind when selecting projects; some funding should be put into design in case of a similar funding opportunity. Mr. Shawver replied RIDOT will have enough projects.

Ms. Shocket asked if there was any additional discussion and that the TAC needed to consider the Amendment # 12 for action. There was no additional discussion.

Mr. Murray moved that:

The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) lends its approval to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #12 as presented to the TAC and forward a recommendation for approval to the State Planning Council.

Ms. Cohen seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously by the TAC.

6. Additional Public Comment

Mr. Grant Dulgarian commented on the value of an interactive public hearing. Mr. Dulgarian also stated that he is not against signs on public property but RIDOT needs to establish regulations that prohibit billboards within a certain distance from their property. Mr. Shawver replied there will be a presentation on the status of the existing regulations. Mr. Dulgarian requested that the State Planning Council withhold their approval unless RIDOT prohibits billboards along the corridor. Mr. Dulgarian also stated that he recalls discussion on maintenance free planting along highways. He asked if there was progress on this topic. Mr. Shawver replied that he did not know.

Ms. Marks announced that October 5 will celebrate International Walk to School Day. The Rhode Island Department of Administration and Department of Transportation, the Audubon Society, and the Coalition for Transportation Choices have planned a press conference with Rhode Island Department of Health Director Michael Fine and the Education Commissioner Deborah Gist speaking about the benefits of walking. So far 27 schools across the state are registered to partake in the event. This is a project for the Audubon Society and the Coalition for Transportation Choice. Ms. Marks left a brochure

7. Other Business

Mr. Schiller commended the Audubon Society's leadership with Safe Routes to School program. He also added that on October 7, the RI Bicycle Coalition will hold the second annual Bicycle/Pedestrian summit at the Biltmore Hotel.

Mr. Schiller also announced that on this Saturday, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. the Sierra Club is co-sponsoring a transportation event on climate change entitled "Reducing the Impact of Transportation on Greenhouse Gases" at the YMCA in Woonsocket.

Ms. Barbara Breslin of FHWA stated that the proposed new federal act currently being discussed to boost job creation is called the American Jobs Act, not ARRA 2.

8. Adjournment

Upon motion of Mr. Murray, seconded by Ms. Barker, the TAC unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:40 p.m.

Submitted By:

Ronnie Sirota, Principal Planner to Linsey Cameron, TAC Secretary